

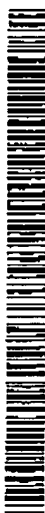
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(54) Title: METHOD/APPARATUS FOR ENABLING PURCHASERS TO OBTAIN RETURN INFORMATION TO RETURN PRODUCTS VIA ON LINE TRANSACTIONS

(57) Abstract: An electronic registration system facilitates authorized product returns and reduces the incidence of improper returns. A retailer sales associate is prompted to enter individual product identification information such as an individual serial number. This individual product identification information is then stored in a data base along with the date on which the product was sold and an appropriate UPC code, SKU number, or manufacturer code. A check digit algorithm may be used to verify the serial number prior to storage. A sales receipt may be imprinted with at least the date of the transaction and the serial number. When a product is returned, the retailer may cross-reference the serial number on the product with that on the receipt to verify the sales receipt. Otherwise, the database may be searched for pertinent sales information. A customer may also access a return authorization engine via the Internet to obtain return approval, an authorization number, return instructions, etc. to reduce retailer hassle.

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## INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.  
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<b>A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER</b> IPC(7) : G06P 153/00 US CL : 705/28 According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC		
<b>B. FIELDS SEARCHED</b> Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols) U.S. : 705/28, 26 Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used) US patent database text search on EAST Non patent literature search on DIALOG		
<b>C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT</b>		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 5,984,508 A (HURLEY) 16 NOVEMBER 1999 SEE ABSTRACT AND FIGS. 2 AND 3	1-18
X	US 5,968,110 A (WESTROPE ET AL.) 19 OCTOBER 1999 SEE FIGS. 7 AND 8	1-18
A,E	US 6,269,344 B1 (JUNGER) 31 JULY 2001 SEE FIG. 3	1-18
A,P	US 6,085,172 A (JUNGER) 04 JULY 2000 SEE FIG. 3	1-18
A,P	US 6,154,738 A (CALL) 28 NOVEMBER 2000 SEE FIGS. 1 AND 7	1-18
<input type="checkbox"/> Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. <input type="checkbox"/> See patent family annex.		
*A* document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance *E* earlier document published on or after the international filing date *L* document which may throw doubt on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified) *O* document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means *P* document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed	*T* later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle of theory underlying the invention *X* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone *Y* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art *Z* document member of the same patent family	
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